

APPLICATION

FOR

UNITED STATES LETTERS PATENT

TITLE: ENSURING THAT ADVERTISEMENTS ARE PLAYED

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Background

The net effect of such circumvention may be that free or low cost content may not be made available. In other words, if advertisers cannot be assured that the advertising will actually be played (as opposed to being

circumvented), they may be unwilling to subsidize the electronic distribution of content.

Therefore, there is a need for a way to ensure that advertising material inserted in content is actually played
5 as originally designed and intended by the advertiser.

Brief Description of the Drawings

Figure 1 is a block diagram of one embodiment of the present invention; and

Figure 2 is a flow chart for software, in accordance
10 with one embodiment of the present invention.

Detailed Description

pub a1 Referring to Figure 1, a processor-based system 10 may include a media player 60 that plays electronic content. Electronic content may include video such as television,
15 audio, games, software, or other media. The media player 60 may be, for example, a compact disk player, a magnetic card reader, an MP-3 player, or a digital video disk player, as examples.

pub a2 The processor-based system 10 may be a conventional
20 desktop computer system, a set-top box, or a processor-based appliance, as examples. The processor-based system 10 may include the media player 60, a display system 54 for displaying visual material and a sound system 56 for playing audio material.

The modem 84 may allow the processor-based system 10 to be coupled to a content distribution system such as the Internet. In addition, content may be received through airwave broadcasts, satellite systems, or cable television systems, as additional examples. In each case, the content may be provided to the system 10 over any available transport.

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Coupled to the digital-to-analog converter 26 is a watermark detector 60. The watermark detector 60 detects whether watermarks present in the content received from a content provider are actually played as intended. For example, the watermark detector 60 may detect whether the watermarked material is played in full at the predetermined play speed and is not otherwise muted, masked, fast-forwarded or stripped from the content. The watermark detector 60 may be coupled to the media player 60 to control the play of content on the media player 60. Thus, content may not be played through the system 10 unless certain advertising material containing a watermark is played as originally intended.

The watermark may be a faint signal that is embedded in the advertising content, that is unstrippable and may not be degraded without degrading the desired content to an unacceptable extent. The faint signal may be designed to be undetectable by users. Watermarks are commonly used with content to protect them from being digitized or re-

the software 90 reports a play validation as indicated at block 96. In other words, the software 90 may report to external sources that the advertisement was actually played by a given processor-based system 10 as intended. This
5 feedback to the advertiser may provide confirmation that in fact the advertising program is being executed as intended. It may also be utilized to develop statistics in some embodiments.

Next, in some embodiments, the advertisement
10 identifier may be added to a particular user's profile as indicated in block 98. A user profile may be developed for everyone who uses a given processor-based system 10. This profile may be developed by requiring a password to begin using the system 10. As a result, a profile may be
15 developed indicating which commercials are viewed by particular users.

This user profile information may be utilized to award credits, points, or rewards to particular users based on their commercial viewing practices. In addition, the
20 profile may be provided to marketing operations for targeted advertisements for particular users.

input Next, the media player 60 may be unlocked as indicated in block 100. In one embodiment, this may mean that a key is provided for decrypting encrypted content and allowing
25 the play of that content in return for having watched a commercial. As another example, the media player 60 may be

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allowed to actually operate to play the rest of the
content. In still another embodiment, the system 10 either
decrypts or allows the play of content received from an
~~external source.~~

5 While the present invention has been described with
respect to a limited number of embodiments, those skilled
in the art will appreciate numerous modifications and
variations therefrom. It is intended that the appended
claims cover all such modifications and variations as fall
10 within the true spirit and scope of this present invention.

What is claimed is: